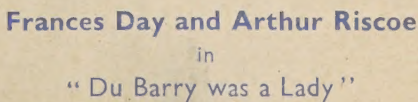


THEATRE WORLD



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(Incorporating PLAY PICTORIAL)

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Edited by Frances Stephens

December, 1942

Over the Footlights

IT looks as though current American musical successes are also greatly to our liking over here. After *Du Barry was a Lady* comes *Let's Face It*, which with the one and only Bobby Howes in a part that suits him down to the ground looks like packing the Hippodrome for a long time to come.

New productions due in the next few weeks or just produced include a farcical comedy *Mixed Relations*, by Guy Paxton and Edward V. Hoile, which opened on November 26th at the Ambassadors with Polly Ward, Barrett Lennard, Geoffrey Wardwell and John Salew in the lead; *Henry IV Part 2* at the Westminster on November 27th with Robert Atkins as Falstaff and Clare Harris as Mistress Quickly; William Congreve's *The Way of the World* at the Mercury (November 24th); the new James Bridie play *Holy Isle*, due at the Arts on or about December 9th, and Robert E. Sherwood's *The Petrified Forest*, starring Owen Nares, Constance Cummings and Hartley Power, opening at the Globe on December 16th. Looking further ahead still we anticipate with keen pleasure particularly these forthcoming H. M. Tennent, Ltd., productions: the revivals of *A Month in the Country*, *Love for Love* and Shaw's *Heartbreak House* (with Edith Evans as Mrs. Hushabye); the new Priestley play *They Came to a City*, with John Clements in the leading part, and the American success *Uncle Harry*, in which Eric Portman will take the rôle now being played by Joseph Schildkrant in New York.

AGAIN we have to record the loss of one of our leading actresses by the death on November 11th of Violet Vanbrugh, at the age of seventy-five. Miss Vanbrugh's was a gracious personality, and everything she did was marked with a distinction now unhappily all too rare.

F.S.



Harlip.

CICELY COURTNEIDGE

A charming new portrait of Cicely Courtneidge, star of the successful musical *Full Swing* at the Palace, which has already passed its 250th performance. During the whole of this long run Miss Courtneidge has not missed a performance, a great achievement when one considers how exacting is her rôle, which keeps her on the stage during almost the entire action.

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New Shows of the Month

"Best Bib and Tucker"

ANOTHER good show comes to the Palladium. George Black certainly knows his public, and *Best Bib and Tucker* is a worthy successor in a long line of first class revues at this home of laughter.

If anything there is more laughter this time, for in addition to Tommy Trinder, who has mastered to perfection the intimate appeal, which is not so easy across that vast auditorium, there is Nat Jackley's superb fooling, and quality humour of the highest from the Cairol Brothers. Nat Jackley, with Jack Clifford and Sammy Curtis nearly stop the show in a sketch along contortionist lines called "Get Into Battle Dress."

There is a neat tribute to our American Allies in the long sequence entitled "The Music of America" in which against many lavish backgrounds we hear American melodies, old and new, with Bernard Clifton, Tommy Trinder, Eleanor Fayre, Mary Naylor, Joan Richards and the dancers Lamar and Rosita, in great prominence.

Baker, Dove and Allen, jugglers with Indian clubs, and Eddy Ready and Joy, trick tumblers, add excitement and variety, and most appealing is the revival of "The Jackdaw of Rheims" (from the Ingoldsby Legends), with Joseph Farrington as The Cardinal, Jack Williams as The Abbott and Margaret Roseby as The Jackdaw. This charming and spectacular fragment, adapted by Basil Macdonald Hastings with music by Herman Finck, was originally produced in *Brighter London* at the Hippodrome in 1914.

F.S.



Ronald Squire as William and Isabel Jeans as Victoria in the revival of *Home and Beauty* at the Playhouse Theatre.

REVIVALS

"Aren't Men Beasts"

IT really doesn't matter what kind of farce it is, provided Robertson Hare loses his trousers at least once, appears in woman's garments, and constantly uses some such word of emphasis as "indubitably" in the way only Mr. Hare can. Of

course he must have Mr. Drayton with him to provide that man-of-the-world foil so necessary to his modest bearing. *Aren't Men Beasts*, it will be recalled, is about a dentist who gets involved, all undeserved, in many trials and tribulations in which sundry glamorous young ladies play a big part, as do the police, when they get the chance. Once again Drayton and Hare are irresistible, with Ruth Maitland re-appearing as the formidable Zelina Potter. Other members of the cast give able support and the whole thing is a most welcome riot.

F.S.

* * *

"Home and Beauty"

THE elegant Playhouse Theatre re-opens with an elegant play in the shape of Somerset Maugham's end of the last war comedy. It is early borne home that

Murder from Memory—Ambassadors, Oct. 29th
(Withdrawn Nov. 21st).

Best Bib and Tucker—Palladium, Nov. 7th.

Let's Face It—Hippodrome, Nov. 19th.

REVIVALS.

Aren't Men Beasts—Garrick, Nov. 11th.

Home and Beauty—Playhouse, Nov. 12th.

sentiment has changed a lot since those days, particularly in regard to the then delicate matter of collusion in divorce; but for all that one can enjoy the finished acting of Isabel Jeans, Ronald Squire and Barry Jones as the odd "triangle" which takes a little sorting out. Some of the witty lines have obviously lost their point with the passage of time, but this story of a pampered woman who finds herself possessed of two husbands when her first spouse turns up after being posted as killed, has too good a plot to misfire all along the line. Anthony Holles is an effective Leicester Paton, Kynaston Reeves is duly pontifical as the lawyer, and Margaret Scudamore is a suitably fussy mother to Victoria, the lady in the dilemma.

* * *

A FULL review of *Let's Face It*, the American musical comedy about soldiers in training (including as background an uncommon number of talented

and pretty girls), will appear next month. Bobby Howes has scored one of his biggest triumphs in this, his tenth production at the Hippodrome, and there are sparkling performances from Joyce Barbour, Zoe Gail and Pat Leonard. Pat Kirkwood contributes her accustomed glamour and pep.

* * *

CYRIL RITCHARD and William Mollison will produce the forthcoming revival of *The Merry Widow* which Jack Hylton will present. Madge Elliott and Cyril Ritchard will star, with Dennis Noble, Carol Raye, Leo Franklin, Frank Tickle and the Damora Ballet in support. The décor has been designed by Professor Ernst Stern; William Chappell designs the dresses.

* * *

TOM ARNOLD and Harry Foster have decided to transfer *Du Barry was a Lady*, featured specially in this issue, to the Phoenix Theatre on Tues., Dec. 22nd.



The Cairoli Brothers, as they appear in *Best Bib and Tucker*. These superb clowning musicians made a tremendous hit when they played in *Get a Load of This* at the Hippodrome, and are repeating their well-deserved success at the Palladium. Theirs is the kind of art beloved of old and young alike, recalling as it does the immortal clowns of other days.



Chessington Zoo comes to Town in a big way at the Scala, where there are many circus joys and thrills for the youngsters. Here is Gena Lipskowska with Romeo, one of her horses. Before she began training and presenting horses Gena Lipskowska was a dancer with the Diaghileff Ballet.



Picture by courtesy of the B.B.C.

Patricia Burke is to be Principal Boy in Francis Laidler's *Mother Goose* at the Coliseum this year. Norman Evans, George Gee, Lesley Osmond and Sylvia Kellaway are also in the cast, and the pantomime promises to be a grand and lavish affair with all the accoutrements of Flying Ballet, transformation scenes, etc. (In the picture above Miss Burke is seen with pianist-composer Harry Jacobson during a midnight rehearsal before one of their broadcasts to North America).

New Lamps for Old

JOHN GIELGUD LOOKS AHEAD

An Interview with

Eric Johns

I RAN into John Gielgud in Shaftesbury Avenue. We had not met for three years, and as he paused to greet me on the corner of Wardour Street it seemed significant that our reunion should take place before the blitzed shell of what was once the Queen's Theatre, which saw so much of his finest work.

My mind's eye looked back a dozen years to that historic occasion when the façade of the Queen's announced that a new Shakespearean star of the first magnitude had crossed the Thames from the Old Vic to conquer the West-End—JOHN GIELGUD in *HAMLET*—and though only in his mid-twenties this youngster more than held his own, despite the fact that Moissi and Ainley were both playing their long celebrated Hamlets in London at the same time.

More recently, within a couple of years of the war, the Queen's presented a more mellow Gielgud who completely captivated critics and playgoers by the unique manner in which he illuminated such classic rôles as Richard II, Shylock and Joseph Surface with appealing freshness, burning sincerity and intense dramatic power. Another unforgettable experience was his philosophising Col. Vershinin in Chekov's *Three Sisters*, perhaps the most perfectly produced play seen in London during the Nineteen-thirties.

To me the Queen's became almost a symbol of Gielgud's greatness as Leader of the English Stage, in which capacity he made, and still makes, the classics really mean something to the man in the street instead of being occasionally revived vehicles for star actors possessing a flair for rhetoric.

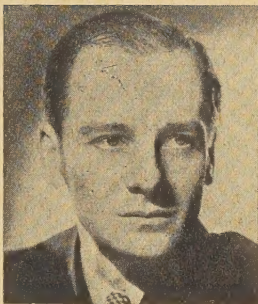
AS I glanced at the tangled mass of roof girders which had crashed into the well of the auditorium, Gielgud seemed to sense my own personal regret.

"To me that debris is one of the saddest sights in all London," he sighed. "I liked the Queen's. It was a good shape and a perfect size for straight plays."

Looking forward to the future, rather than back to the past, I remarked: "There is, of course, some consolation in the fact that here in the very heart of the West-End the blitz has provided an ideal site for the perfect post-war theatre. I'd like to see a newly designed house on this corner, dedicated to your own productions."

"New York has theatres bearing the

Mr. Gielgud's next production, when *The Importance of Being Earnest* finishes its season in two or three weeks, will be Congreve's *Love for Love*, date and theatre not yet specified.



Houston Rogers.

names of Maxine Elliott, Nora Bayes and Ethel Barrymore; Paris has long cherished her Sarah Bernhardt Theatre; so why shouldn't London boast a John Gielgud Theatre? What site could be more suitable than that upon which you enjoyed your first night of Shakespearean stardom in the West-End? British audiences seem far too reluctant to pay public tribute to great stage players still in their heyday. The Garrick and Wyndham's are the only two London theatres named after great actors, but they immortalise names that have long rested in the grave.

"Suppose my fancy could be translated into reality, I wonder what suggestions you would offer to the architect when he called upon you for guidance before commencing the design of this new playhouse?"

"I wonder!" mused Gielgud, as we halted on the pavement before a boarded-up arch, once the entrance to the Gallery, where countless admirers had perched for hours on uncomfortable queue stools in order to gaze upon their idol from the lofty vantage point of the front row with its shining brass rail to cool their burning foreheads on sultry summer nights.

"My first desire," he reflected, "would be to build a theatre without the existing snobbery that decrees stone stairs for the Gallery and carpeted corridors for the Stalls. The accommodation offered to patrons in the cheaper parts of some of the older London theatres is nothing less than an insult. No audience can be expected to give full and appreciative attention to a play when sentenced to sit for three solid hours on a wooden toast-rack."

"All theatres should possess perfect acoustics, and I have always maintained that the old-fashioned semi-circular theatres, nearest and dearest to the hearts of actors and audiences, are ideal for sound. In houses built on this plan I have known all the subtlety of a stage whisper carry to the most obscure corners of the Gallery, without the aid of microphones and loud-speakers which completely shatter all illusion and

play the oddest and most distracting tricks with the voice.

"I would favour one broad sweeping balcony in the house to accommodate what is now known as the Stalls public. The most expensive seats would be found in the front of this circle, while the ground floor would be devoted entirely to the Pit with its moderate priced seats. The actor would welcome the opportunity of feeling the glowing warmth of genuine theatre lovers so close to him, instead of separated from him by a vast sea of Stalls.

"Several modern theatres have been built with a view to switching over to films in periods of emergency when suitable plays fail to present themselves for production. In consequence, many of them are far too wide in conception; they develop 'blind spots' where hearing is impossible; and they kill the atmosphere of an intimate play even before the rise of the curtain. I would impress the architect with the necessity of limiting the size of the auditorium according to the width of the proscenium arch. Even seats on the ends of rows should face the actual proscenium opening, and not that dull stretch of blank wall which often joins the proscenium pillars to the side wall of the auditorium. The end-of-the-row playgoer should not have to look obliquely across the house to see the stage; it should be directly in front of him.

"In such a theatre, equipped with the most elaborate stage machinery as well as the most up-to-date lighting system, I'd like to establish a permanent company, generous in number and versatile in artistry, so that I'd be able to consider the production of any play, and even to produce three simultaneously.

"As an instance, I'd like to have *Macbeth*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Love for Love* in the repertoire at the same time and play them in irregular sequence, in the manner that opera companies stage their various productions from time to time during a season. Three well-conceived plays might last a year, but patrons would need to consult the advertisements in order to discover which play happened to be in the bill on the night they decided to go to the theatre.

"At first, such a procedure might seem strange to the playgoer, but why should it? After all, operagoers and balletomanes never dream of going to the theatre without first verifying the name of the particular work being performed on the night in question. They are quite accustomed to operas and ballets being alternatively staged and shelved, with productions only at occasional intervals.

"The actor in such a permanent company would have a long-term contract which would help to kill the precariousness of his profession and give him a sense of

security and peace of mind such as artists have never known in this country in the past.

"He would no longer be compelled to accept lucrative film offers by day while playing in the theatre by night—a practice which now helps him to meet the high cost of living, but which tends to exhaust him physically and mentally. No artist can be expected to do full justice to either stage or screen when attempting to serve two masters at the same time.

"Five or six weeks of leisurely rehearsal would be possible in such a company instead of the normal two and a half weeks. With the longer time at their disposal actors would be able to soak themselves in the atmosphere of the play and could devote so much more study to delicate character shading in their own individual parts.

"Furthermore, they would come to know each other so intimately as artists that their team work should well-nigh touch perfection by each player appreciating the strength and limitations of his colleagues and adapting himself accordingly. The Saint Denis production of *Three Sisters* at the Queen's early in 1938 was praised for the superlative quality of the acting and for the perfect ensemble achieved by a glittering company of stars. One critic said 'it was more like an orchestration than a production.' This was largely made possible by the fact that Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Peggy Ashcroft, Carol Goodner, Angela Baddeley, Leon Quartermaine and I had played together so often over a period of years that we had a penetrating knowledge of each other's reactions and technique.

"As Andre Obey wrote for the *Compagnie des Quinze* at the Theatre Vieux Colombier in Paris, so new authors would write with a particular permanent company in mind, to create a vehicle which that group of artists could interpret to perfection. They would have to be generous with their royalties, as the repertoire system would necessarily oust the long-run custom, such as we know it to-day.

"Throughout a long consecutive run a popular success registers about 400 performances in a year, but in the repertoire of a permanent company five or six years might elapse before the play reached its 400 mark. The author would have to wait for his money, but on the other hand there is the suggestion that a stubborn success might be played at regular intervals for a lifetime or more, just as *Carmen*, *Faust* and *Tosca* are still presented year after year in the opera house.

IT was good to know that the First Gentleman of the English Theatre was not sighing for the end of the war merely in order to slip into the comfortable

(Continued on page 31)



Arthur Riscoe as Louis XV meets Frances Day as Madame Du Barry in the gardens of the Petit Trianon. A brilliant scene from Act One, which gives some idea of the lavish décor and costumes.

TOM ARNOLD & HARRY FOSTER

present

Du Barry was a Lady

**NEW YORK'S BIGGEST
MUSICAL COMEDY HIT**

Music and Lyrics by **COLE PORTER**

PICTURES BY BASIL SHACKLETON



IN NEW YORK CITY — The Club Petite

The opening scene in which we are introduced to the "personnel" at a well-known New York Club. Above: Alice Barton (Frances Marsden) and Harry Norton (Teddy Beaumont), dancers, rehearse their cabaret number "Every Day a Holiday." Below: Louis Blore, ex-washroom attendant at the Club (Arthur Riscoe), celebrates his good luck in winning a sweepstake. With him, centre, is Vi Hennessey (Inga Andersen).



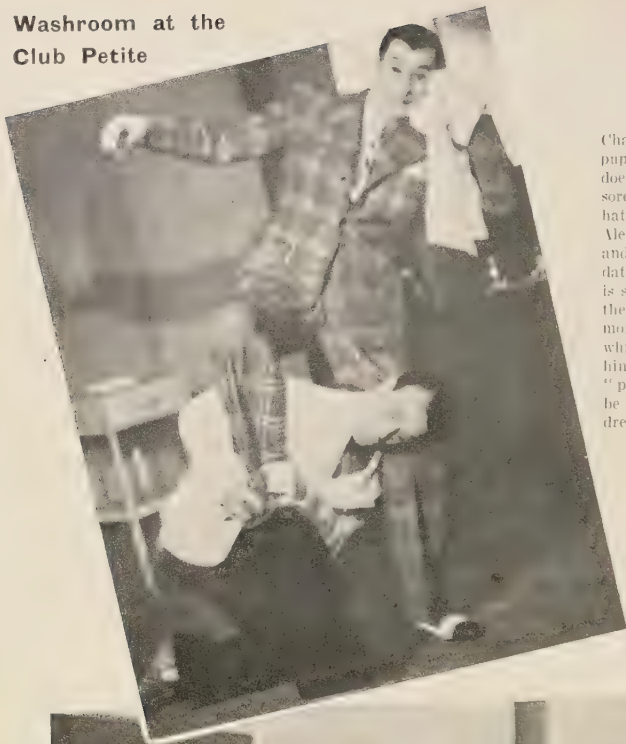


Left: Louis agrees to put his successor, Charley (Jackie Hunter), through his paces. The solemn little man in the outsize suit, is not, however, so harmless as his appearance suggests, as can be judged by the scene below.



(Right): Jenny Daly (Frances Day), spells glamour at the Club Petite. Here she is rehearsing with the Club's Starlets. Louis Blore has fallen for Jenny in a big way, but that young lady prefers Alex Barton, good-looking young patron of the Club, in spite of his marital complications. Louis's new found wealth fails to tempt her.

**Washroom at the
Club Petite**

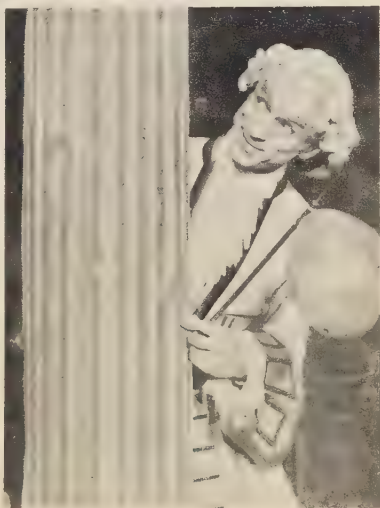


(Charley proves a none too apt pupil in the Washroom, but Louis does his best. Later, Louis, still sore at Jenny's indifference, hatches a plot to confound young Alex, who comes in for a wash and brush up before keeping a date with Jenny. (Below): Louis is seen mixing two drinks, one of them drugged. At the crucial moment he forgets which is which and gets the wrong drink himself. Needless to say he "passes out" completely, only to be visited by the most fantastic dream, as the following pages will show.

Below:
Bruce Trent as Alex.



Meet the Du Barry, mistress of Louis XV, none other, of course, than Jenny Daly, looking ravishing in the gowns of the period. Louis Blore dreams he is at Versailles, himself the pleasure loving Louis XV (*below*), whom the Du Barry treats with considerable heartlessness.



Charley re-appears as the Dauphin of France (*above*), whose childish pranks are a source of great annoyance at the Court.

AT VERSAILLES

In Louis's dream his friends and enemies at the Club Petite become members of the French Court, retaining, however, the wise-cracks and idiom of present day New York.

The Gardens o

Harry Norton of the Club Petite becomes Captain of the King's Guard in Louis's dream. Here he is talking to Mme. Comtesse du Barry in the Gardens of the Petit Trianon.



(Right)

The Dauphin makes merry with the ladies of the Court, equipped as he usually is with toy trumpet and balloon. The lovely costumes and setting convey perfectly the extravagance and luxury of Louis's Court.



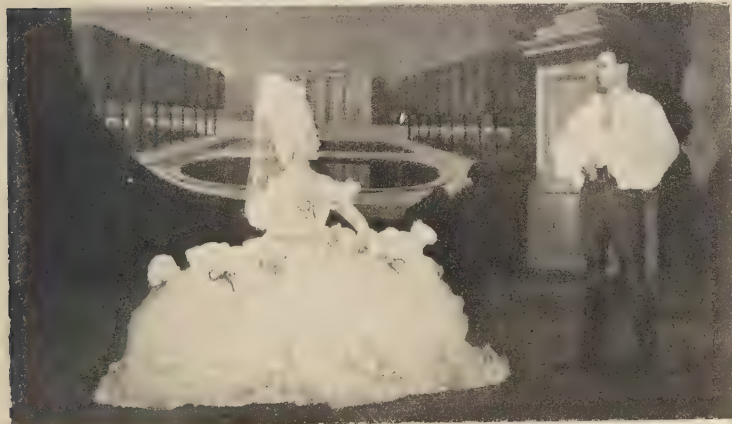
(Left)

Louis XV and Du Barry sing together "Picture Me Without You," one of the early numbers in the dream sequence.

the Petit Trianon

(Right):

His Most Royal Majesty
the King of France has
an eye for the ladies.
Another scene in the
Gardens at Versailles.



(Left):

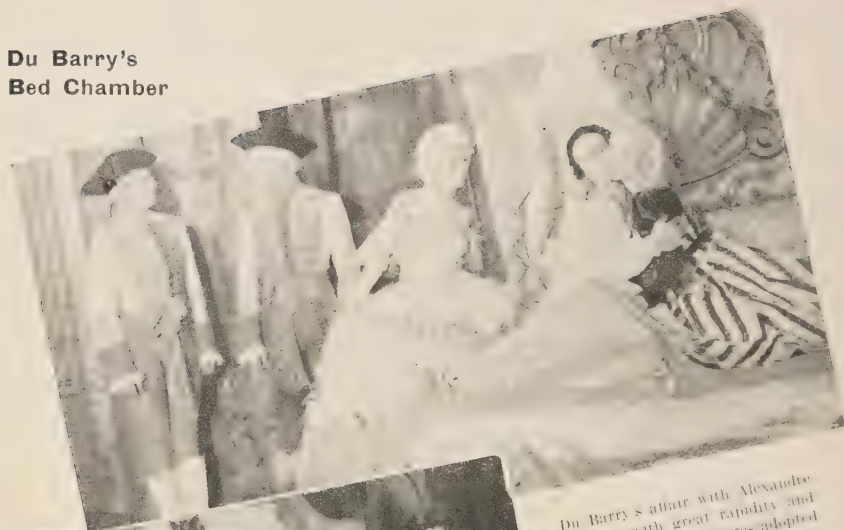
Du Barry meets
Alexandre (in
whom we recog-
nise Alex Barton).
brought to the
Court on a charge
of lampooning the
King's mistress.
It is a case of love
at first sight.

(Right):

The King finds the Du
Barry in one of her
more approachable
moods. She has on the
whole a neat way of
holding him at arm's
length.



Du Barry's Bed Chamber



Du Barry's affair with Alexandre develops with great rapidity and many are the subterfuges adopted to hoodwink His Majesty. (Chorus) Mme. la Marquise Alisande de Vernay (Alice Barton of the New York Chorus) aids and abets the young lovers, and left: the King pays a rare and fruitless visit to his mistress's bed chamber.



A charming picture of the ladies of the Court at the Masque Ball in Louis XV's Salon.



A Salon at the Petit Trianon

(Above): The Court Ballerina (Diane Gardiner) with the Corps de Ballet, dance the Danse Victoire and Danse Erotique Ballet in the Salon at the Petit Trianon. Below: Alexandre, brought before the Court, listens to the Du Barry singing his notorious song "Du Barry was a Lady."





(Above): The King receives some unwanted attention from his son, the Dauphin. (Right): The Court Ballerina and Ensemble in the delightful Danse Tzigane

(Above): Alexandre's lampoon having been twisted by the Du Barry to appear a most loyal and patriotic ditty, the King is mollified and straightway decorates the young man for services rendered. However, the royal approval is short-lived when Alexandre disclaims any such intention, and after further troubles the Du Barry gives a grudging consent to entertain the King that night, if her lover is spared.





A Room in the Royal Apartment

At the very moment when it seemed the Du Barry would have to honour her promise to the King, the playful Dauphin lets go an arrow. *Above*: Louis, enraged and humiliated abuses his son, and *below*, with a sympathetic Du Barry as audience, the King is attended by his doctor (Charles Stone) who after much preamble gets to the root of the trouble. It is at this painful moment that Louis Blere begins to recover from his drugged unconsciousness. He finds himself back in New York at the Club Petite.





The Club Petite, New York

Jenny Daly, blissfully unaware of her rôle as the notorious Du Barry, sings that exquisite piece of nonsense "Katie went to Haiti," and *right*, with Louis, the final number of the show, "Friendship." Louis, a sadder but wiser man is now only too pleased to help Jenny and Alex Barton, even with his sweep fortune, and to return to his old job in the Washroom.



The final curtain. *L-R*: Jackie Hunter, Inga Andersen, Bruce Trent, Frances Day, Arthur Riscoe and Frances Marsden (the latter unhappily only partly to be seen in this picture)

Echoes from Broadway

By our American Correspondent **E. MAWBY GREEN**

IF this page seems to have been a bit tardy in transmitting news of the new Broadway season it is mainly because there has been little to get excited about—and here it is practically November!

We started off with *I Killed the Count*, by Alec Coppel, which miss-and-run melodrama had been threatening Broadway since London saw it in 1937. It did have rather a tricky idea, but the technique used in projecting it was too dated to trap your entire interest. Now that it's over with, what we remember best about it was Ethel Morrison's playing of Polly, the Cockney chamber maid. Miss Morrison last year flicked her feather duster through two other unaccepted New York stage offerings with howling success.

"The Morning Star"

If Miss Morrison had to get stuck with a flop this season, we would have preferred to see her do Mrs. Lane, the Cockney housekeeper in Guthrie McClintic's production of Emlyn Williams' *The Morning Star*, which was played by Brenda Forbes. Miss Forbes is a talented young actress with a real flare for character, and was recently seen in Mr. Williams' *Yesterday's Magic* (*The Light of Heart*) as Mrs. Banner, the Cockney landlady, which she grilled for laughs and got them. Her performance in *The Morning Star* was almost a duplication of what she did in *Yesterday's Magic*. She got you laughing but never crying. Possibly because she had not the maturity and true feeling for the part. In the more experienced hands of Ethel Morrison, Mrs. Lane would have emerged with her funny side up, but in the more serious moments she would have reached down and rung your heart out. We do not wish to imply that *The Morning Star* would have lasted longer than three weeks on Broadway with a different Mrs. Lane, but Ethel Morrison would have made it more difficult to forget it. Despite the distinguished production afforded it by Guthrie McClintic, *The Morning Star* was as unsuited to American audiences as was *The Light of Heart*. Notwithstanding its fine intentions and sombre significance, it became tedious from too much talk that meant absolutely nothing over here. The part of Cliff Parrilow, the rising young doctor, played by Emlyn Williams in London, and in New York by Gregory Peck—a quite charming and capable young actor—this was something Mr. Williams must have taken to bed to sleep over and got him blitzed in one of

England's worst air raids, for this main character appeared to have been shaken together with little signs of conviction or appeal, and put the plot in a crater almost from the beginning.

Fetched from the films were Gladys Cooper for Mrs. Parrilow, Jill Esmond for Alison Parrilow and Wendy Barrie for Wanda Baring. Miss Cooper gave a beautifully moving performance, and we were indebted to Mr. McClintic for bringing Miss Cooper back to the stage, however brief the interlude.

Saroyan Series

Then we had a session with William Saroyan, America's problem playwright. Having made some money writing for the movies, Mr. Saroyan decided to open The Saroyan Theatre on Broadway and present a series of his own plays under his own management and direction. *Across the Board on To-morrow Morning and Talking to You* comprised the opening bill. Neither was successful. His selection of plays was bad and so was his direction. He needs to be disciplined, and in future it is believed he will submit more readily to outside advice. He has been turning out plays like hot cakes. Now he is getting burned and must get down to more conventional tactics. In his prize-winning play *The Time of Your Life*, it was a novelty to have his characters drift in and out again and give way to whatever whim possessed them, belonging to nobody apparently but themselves. Being a bar-room scene, this was not too drastic a departure from regular stage set-up. Fortunately, or unfortunately for Mr. Saroyan, the world is not made up of one big bar-room, and characters need to be developed and accounted for. So Mr. Saroyan must now get on the wagon if he wishes to win further Broadway acclaim.

Eddie Dowling, who was the star and co-producer of Mr. Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*, has presented and is appearing in Saroyan's *Hello Out There*, and a revival of *Magic*, by G. K. Chesterton. *Hello Out There*, under Mr. Dowling's direction came out better with the critics, but this one-acter of Mr. Saroyan's is no match in literary brilliance for Mr. Chesterton's *Magic*, despite the out-moded style of the latter's works. In fact we did not think Mr. Dowling worked any great wonders in the main rôle in *Magic*. We had considerable difficulty in understanding him, and Julie

(Continued overleaf)



Flora Robson.

FLORA ROBSON as she appears in her latest play
The Damask Cress.

Haydon, who invariably appears with him, is only adequate as Patricia Carleon.

Brock Pemberton has presented *Janie*, a new comedy by Josephine Bentham and Herschel Williams, direction by Antoinette Perry and settings by John Root.

It is a pleasantly hilarious piece of hokum, not overburdened with originality or brilliance, but is finding success. Gwen Anderson, a charming and talented young lady, is making her first Broadway bow as Janie, who is having teen trouble, caught between her feelings for a faithful old school beau and the sudden arrival of a handsome young soldier in slick, shining uniform. When Janie's unsuspecting parents go out for a Saturday night celebration, Janie decides to show off her soldier to her girl friends. She throws a little party, which gets entirely out of hand, for instead of the few soldiers invited showing up, the whole regiment crashes the party. When the parents return they find soldiers, soldiers everywhere, and not a drop in the house left to drink. A condition that takes a lot of explaining, but by morning all is calm and bright again. *Janie* has its jagged moments, but there is enough in it to keep you laughing most of the time.

It probably seemed a good idea when S. M. Herzig decided to write *Vickie*, a farce about women engaged in civilian war work, showing the wives strutting around in bumpy blue uniforms while the husbands froth and foam at home. Perhaps there

still is a farce in these Women's Defence Organisations, but *Vickie* isn't it. Since *Vickie* was conceived these women in uniform can no longer be looked upon as a novelty and a nuisance. Consequently situations that may have seemed funny twelve months ago have now taken on a more serious note. *Vickie* tried desperately hard to amuse but gave up after five weeks.

New War Play

The critics have gone all out in their praise of Maxwell Anderson's *The Eve of St. Mark*, which drama Mr. Anderson has dedicated to his nephew, Sergeant Lee Chambers, "one of the first to go, one of the first to die that we may keep this earth for free men."

It was Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings who wrote the first successful serious war play last time, *What Price Glory*, which came six years after the Armistice of 1918. *The Eve of St. Mark* is already being called the *What Price Glory* of this war. Whether there will be reason to change this opinion later on remains to be seen.

This reviewer is too young to know the impression *What Price Glory* left behind when it was first produced, and perhaps is still too young to feel all the fine things being written about *The Eve of St. Mark*. Instead of coming away from the theatre radiant and inspired, we were greatly disappointed and depressed. A play that shifts around in twelve scenes must inevitably lose significance and suspense, especially when some of the scenes are as skimpily drawn as one or two of them in *The Eve of St. Mark*, and would not stand up if written by a playwright of less renown. The central figure is that of a farm boy. A nice boy from a nice self-respecting family, a good representation of ordinary American life. First it is the draft and then comes Pearl Harbour. Soon our hero is stranded on a small island in the Philippines, holding out to the end with a handful of his comrades. The action shifts back home again for the final curtain, where we see his distraught but understanding mother saying goodbye to her remaining two sons. Previously the distressed father had tried to serve but had been told he could be of better service on the farm. That is the patriotic note on which the play ends, with appropriate poetic speeches interspersed throughout. We were not moved. We felt if the mother had ten sons, she would have been expected to see them all go in the same cold, self-sacrificing manner. Apart from the Philippine Island scene, the two others remembered best are one of low comedy in the barracks, the other in a restaurant where two good girls gone wrong hang out waiting to drink and dawdle with the boys from the barracks, also cheap comedy. We do not remember the drama

(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

Arts Theatre

SIX MONTHS OF PROGRESS

● ALEC CLUNES, Director of the Arts Theatre Club, and one of its principal producers, had already gained a considerable name as an actor before his present activities as the Arts began. Both Alec Clunes' parents were on the stage, but originally he took up advertising and journalism as a career. For some years Mr. Clunes had considerable experience as an amateur actor, and produced two seasons of repertory at the Tavistock Little Theatre. He commenced his professional career with the Ben Greet Players, joined the Old Vic Company in 1934 where he played till 1936. After that he was seen in many West End productions, including *George and Margaret*, *I Killed the Count*, *Music at Night*, etc. His monologues at the Players Theatre were also an enormous success. Below he is seen as Vassily Vassilyitch Svetlovidov in Tcheliyev's *The Swan Song*, produced this season at the Arts.



● WHEN early this year Alec Clunes and his group of actors made public their plans for taking over the Arts Theatre, which since the "blitz" days of the Arts Theatre Ballet has had a somewhat chequered career, there were many who said in effect, *c'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la guerre!* Mr. James Agate, early consulted, became a staunch supporter, but nevertheless expressed his fears that there were not in London enough lovers of the serious theatre to see the thing through.

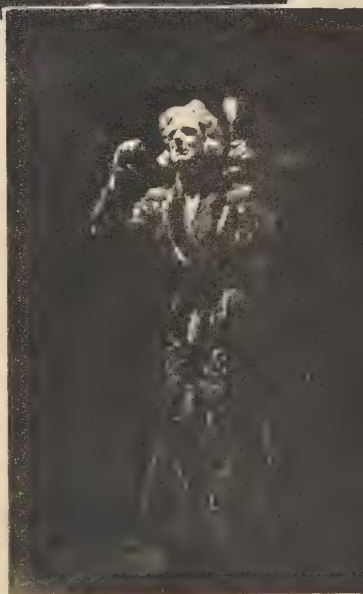
After six months, it looks as though Mr. Clunes' optimism was justified.

What is the policy of the Arts Theatre Group of Actors? The theatre is, of course, open to members only, the fee for membership (as distinct from full Club membership) being a modest 5/- a year. Members are guaranteed nine shows each year at moderate theatre prices to which a guest can be taken (there is incidentally a useful theatre snack bar for members, open until 10.30 p.m.).

The Group, under the leadership of Alec Clunes, operates through a committee, which reads and selects the plays to be performed, but is in no sense an arbitrary body. Though some of the actors have appeared in most of the productions to date the Arts is not a repertory company in the usual sense. All members of the company, whatever their standing, receive a flat £5 a week, and many West End stars, be it noted, are happy to appear at the Arts between shows. Any profits accruing go back to the theatre, the players sharing equally in this happy event.

The length of the run of the plays—usually three weeks—is mathematically worked out against the membership figure and the fact that the theatre holds 320 for eight performances a week.

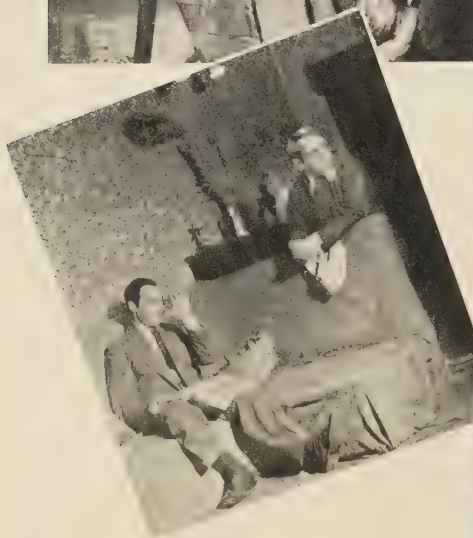
(Continued on foot of next page)



Tunbridge Sadgwick.



(Above): Ralph Berger (Richard Attenborough) argues with his mother (Lily Kann) while his hen-pecked father (Michael Raghan) looks on. (Left): Moe Axelrod (Julian Somers), lamed and embittered in the 1914-18 war, expresses his disapproval of Mrs. Berger. Jacob, Ralph's grandfather (Martin Miller) concurs. Below: Moe tells the unhappy, frustrated Hennie (Vivienne Bennett) he loves her.



“Awake and Sing”

(Continued from previous page)

The FIRST PRODUCTION

The pictures in the following pages will give some idea of the high standard attained, but perhaps the crowning triumph of six months' work is that James Bridie has written his latest play specially for the Arts. *Holy Isle*, opening early in December, is in typical Bridie vein, expressing, to quote the author, “the impact of civilisation on the age of innocence or some such tilly-tally.” Alastair Sim produces, with Margaretta Scott,

Vivienne Bennett, Herbert Lomas, A. Bromley Davenport and Harold Scott in the cast.

It is the aim of the Arts Theatre Group of Actors to give the best the theatre has to offer, particularly in new plays. This is all the more laudable at a time when revivals or American successes are the order of the day. Every true lover of the theatre owes it to himself to become a member.

(Below): Prosperous, florid Uncle Morty (Harry Ross) enjoys a laugh with Bessie at the expense of the timid Myron.



(Above): Uncle Morty is given a haircut.

(Below): Ralph is desperately unhappy in his conflict with poverty and the iron will of his mother.



(Above): Bessie in an uncontrollable rage breaks Jacob's loved gramophone records. The gentle sensitive old man is heartbroken.

● The choice of Clifford Odets' play as the opening production on May 20th was a happy one that augured well for the future. This strong play, with its background of Jewish poverty in the Bronx district of New York, its undercurrent of disillusionment with the social conditions prevailing before the war, the frustrated hopes of the young and lost dreams of the old, gave splendid acting opportunities, which the company seized with both hands. Lily Kann, as the dominating Jewish mother, gave a not-to-be-forgotten performance of great brilliance.



Tunbridge-Sedgwick.



Above: Viola meets her brother. *L-R:* Vivienne Bennett as Olivia, Richard Attenborough as Sebastian, Jeremy Hawk as Orsino, Jean Forbes-Robertson as Viola and Joyce Redman as Maria. *Left:* The Drinking Scene, with Alec Clunes as Feste, Denys Blakelock as Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Russell Thorndike as Sir Toby Belch. *Below:* Malvolio (Walter Hudd) alarms Olivia with his strange behaviour.



"Twelfth Night." the second production, was notable for a freshness of treatment without eccentricity. Olivia emerged a sprightly personality, and Maria wickedly young and attractive. In Jean Forbes-Robertson the company had perhaps the best Viola of our day; Walter Hudd's Malvolio was excellently well done, and there was a delightful air of spontaneity in the portrayal of Andrew Aguecheek, Toby Belch and Feste. If the special music by G. Allan Gray was not attuned to all ears, it was at least a laudable experiment, and there could be nothing but praise for the charming décor and costumes, designed by Rolf Gérard.



Tunbridge-Sedgwick.

“The Springtime of Others,” Jean-Jacques Bernard’s sensitive play on an unusual “triangle” theme, was the third production, with Tchekhov’s *The Swan Song*, in the same programme. Above: A scene from *The Springtime of Others*, in which Clarisse (Mary Hinton, centre) half unconsciously tries to make trouble between her daughter Gilberte (Isolde Denham) and son-in-law Gardier (Jeremy Hawk). Maurice Colbourne produced.



John Vickers.

“Magic,” G. K. Chesterton’s “fantastic comedy,” preceded by Tchekhov’s amusing *The Proposal*, provided the fourth programme, opening on August 26th. Once again a distinguished cast gave of their best, and in the scene from *Magic* above, L-R, are seen Walter Hudd as The Rev. Smith, Graveley Edwards as Dr. Grimthorpe, Julian Randall as Morris Carleon, Alec Clunes as the Stranger, Penelope Dudley-Ward as Patricia Carleon and Stanford Holme as the Duke.



Above: The exiled White Russians celebrate Easter, 1939, Russian fashion, in Mme. Barinova's house, in West Kensington. (L-R: John Ruddock, David Bird, Noel Willman, Gibb McLaughlin, Miki Iveria, Susan Richards, Josephine Middleton, Christine Silver and Max Adrian).



Left: The old choreographer, Tansmann (Noel Willman) collapses after the little dance he gives as his Easter present.

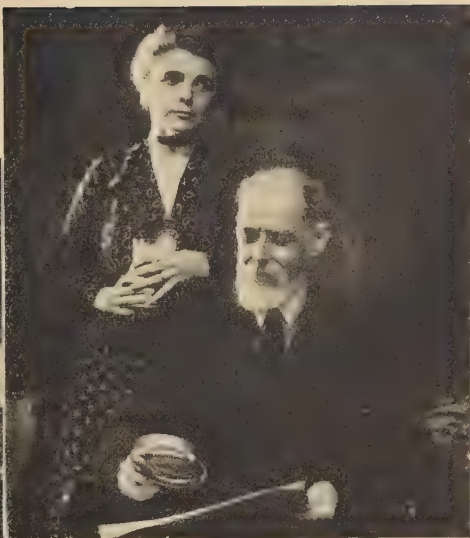
PICTURES

BY TUNBRIDGE-SEDGWICK

"House of Regrets"

Widespread acclaim greeted the fifth production which opened on October 6th. Nothing could have justified more fully the existence of the Arts Theatre Group of Actors than their faith in presenting for the first time on any stage Peter Ustinov's brilliant play, written when he was only nineteen. The acting was masterly, and the story of this group of forgotten Russian exiles, compounded of laughter and tears, moving in the extreme. Many critics voted the play the most outstanding of the war, and the season, planned originally for three weeks, was extended. The play was produced by Alec Clunes, with décor by Nadia Benois.

The third of September, 1939. The old General Andrei Cherevenko, *below*, believing he will be needed in the new war he hopes will restore the old order in Russia, waits proudly in full uniform for the call that never comes.



Above: The General's daughter, Mme. Barinova, looks ahead with misgiving, while Admiral Konstantin Papanin views coming events calmly and philosophically.



The first year of war brings many problems for the little Russian community. Only the old Admiral keeps detached and level-headed, dispensing to all unfailingly his sound and kindly advice. *Above:* The scene in which is thrown into sharp contrast the hopes and aspirations of the old and younger generations. Marina, Mme. Barinova's youngest daughter, declaims her new found faith—Communism—to her startled relations. *L-R:* Josephine Middleton as Mme. Krohne, a visitor from Berlin, Christine Silver as Mme. Samina, Julian Dallas as Paul Barinov, Gibb McLaughlin as Strukhov, the General's old batman, Max Adrian as the General, Susan Richards as Mme. Barinova, David Bird as Sergei Timofeev, John Ruddock as the Admiral and Lalage Lewis as Marina.



Vic-Wells: the English National Ballet?

Audrey
Williamson
reviews
a New Book

(Left):
A delightfully
informal pic-
ture of Ninette
de Valois, who
is seen talking
to Constant
Lambert.

Picture by
Tunbridge-
Sedwick.

AT a time when ballet is passing through a period of unprecedented popularity, accompanied by a corresponding lack of serious standards of criticism, *Vic-Wells: A Ballet Progress*, published by Gollancz at 6s., is a book which has a special usefulness. Its author, P. W. Manchester, is well-known to readers of *Theatre World* for her reviews of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and her book is a study of the work and progress of this nearest approach to an English National Ballet from its first programmes, composed "mainly of scraps," to the present day, when even in war-time it is able to present a repertoire of approaching twenty ballets, many of them cornerstones in the development of an English idiom in choreography. There has long been need for such a book, and historically it must be of absorbing interest to the balletomane of long standing, retracing in its pages a succession of past delights, as well as to those with awkward gaps in their ballet experience or only recently attracted to the art.

The book is written with admirable commonsense and is—thank heavens—completely free from the type of overwriting, once so prevalent, that attempted such incredible acrobatic feats as suspending a ballet on a tear-drop! That Miss Manchester represents the best type of balletomane is apparent not only in the body of her book, in which appreciation and criticism are sensibly balanced, but also in her short foreword, the sting of which is very neatly placed in the tail.

One wouldn't, of course, be a balletomane if each particular hair did not stand on end at certain of Miss Manchester's judgments and opinions. Most critics have their idiosyncrasies, and Miss Manchester's is a marked preference for virtuosity that tends to colour her estimate of both choreographers and dancers. It blinded her to the signifi-

cance of *Hamlet* as a ballet, and it has led her in this book into the trap of dismissing Robert Helpmann, because of certain minor technical deficiencies, as "not by any means a good classical dancer" or even of the *danseur noble* type. Here there is evident confusion of thought, since Miss Manchester praises Helpmann's supremacy as a partner, which she admits is the primary function of the male in classical ballet, and has noticed that the great virtuoso solo in *The Sleeping Princess* is given, not to the classical "lead," but to the dancer of the Blue Bird. The truth is, of course, that sheer virtuosity no more makes a great classical dancer than it makes a great classical pianist. The *danseur noble* is distinguished from the virtuoso by an indefinable quality of "style" that Helpmann possesses in a quite remarkable degree. In physique Helpmann, tall and exquisitely symmetrical in proportions, is also the ideal type; it is quite untrue that only bulging muscles carry the necessary strength. Far too much fuss is made about Helpmann's supposed lack of technique. If he has not all the flamboyant tricks of the virtuoso he is still a fine dancer by any standards, and in the second Act of *Giselle* his elevation, lightness and fineness are unsurpassed in recent years.

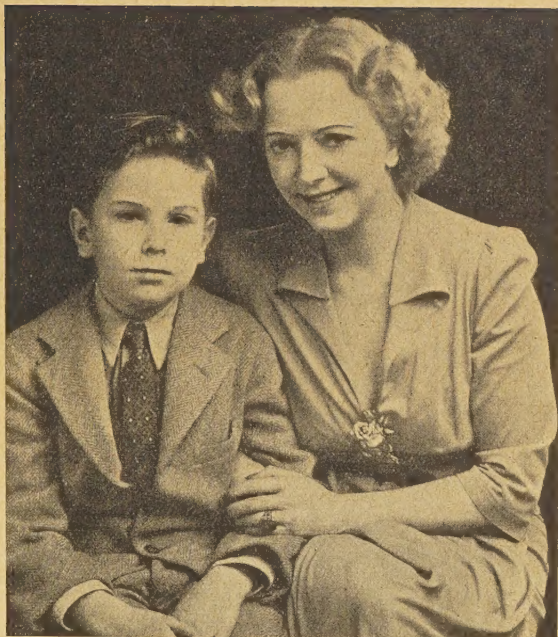
If I have spent overmuch time on this point it is because the recognition of "style" in a classical dancer is an absolute essential if standards are not to disintegrate, and the quality is very rare. Helpmann has it; Fonteyn has it; and so has the 15-year-old Beryl Grey, whose dancing in *Lac des Cygnes* and *Sylphides* shows also remarkable promise of poetical development. In other ways Miss Manchester's estimate of dancers is observant and just, and she has caught the essence of Markova's unforgettable Sugar Plum Fairy—"brittle and sparkling, like the frosted icing on a Christmas cake." Her description of Fonteyn's first entrance as Aurora, "like a burst of sunshine," is equally happy, and it is good to read such discriminating praise of Celia Franca, a dancer of unusually beautiful "flow" of movement (*Sylphides* is just three times as good when she dances the Prelude, which for some reason never happens on first or last nights). There is also magnificent praise of Helpmann as a mime, though one would mildly protest that his greatness consists in giving character even to those classical heroes which Miss Manchester thinks he must find "excessively uninteresting." (If this is true, which I doubt, he is far too fine an artist to show it.) One

(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

In the Limelight

HELENA PICKARD (Lady Hardwicke) with her son, Edward, recently photographed in New York after this popular actress had helped to raise a quarter of a million dollars by appearing in a "Celebrity Parade" programme in nine Canadian cities with Anna Neagle, Moyna Macgill, Colin Keith-Johnston, and Dennis King. During the tour Helena Pickard appeared as Florence Nightingale in a play by Monckton Hoffe entitled *The Lady Who Wishes to be Known as Madam*, which was set in the third month of the London Blitz, and included such distinguished characters as Lincoln, Gladstone, Nelson and Wellington.

Photo by Vandamm.



Esmond Knight writes his Life

ESMOND KNIGHT'S autobiography, already in the press, promises to be one of the most interesting back-stage books written for a long time, and will be eagerly awaited by all three Services and a vast civilian public who have enjoyed his fine work on the stage and before the microphone.

It contains attractive pen portraits of at least two notable ancestors, namely, John Buxton Knight, the distinguished painter of the Constable School, and Frank Barrett, the popular novelist and dramatist of the 'Nineties.

The major portion of the book is devoted to this young actor's successful scaling of the ladder of fame, from walking-on at the Old Vic to playing romantic leads at Old Drury, and will throw interesting sidelights on a whole host of theatrical celebrities with whom he has been associated. Many famous names will appear on the pages . . . Charlotte Greenwood, Danilova, Tilly Losch, Adele Dixon, Marie Burke, Nora Swinburne, Phyllis Monkman, Jessie Matthews, Florence Desmond and Dame May Whitty being but a few of his colleagues.

Later chapters, reflecting Esmond's versatile interests, will be devoted to his hobby of falconry, filming in Berlin, the London Blitz, life in the Royal Navy, the Battle

of the "Bismarck," and the author's amazing fight against blindness at St. Dunstan's, where he won fresh laurels and emerged with boundless enthusiasm to make a brilliant re-entry into films as the sneering Gestapo Chief Von Schiffer in *Silver Fleet*. Connoisseurs who have seen private showings of this picture declare Esmond's performance to be a shattering portrayal.

New Lamps for Old *(Continued)*

existence of a successful West-End star actor. It was refreshing to learn that he was eagerly anticipating a new era of improved playhouses and distinguished plays, with players regularly attaining heights of acting such as we have enjoyed only on the rarest occasions in the past.

As this young actor left me to wander on his way up Shaftesbury Avenue, the ruins of the Queen's no longer seemed "one of the saddest sights in all London." Those blasted walls took on a new significance as I caught sight of a massive piece of masonry half-embedded in the floor of the foyer. I felt almost convinced that one day that block of stone would be transformed into the foundation-stone of a new playhouse which, under John Gielgud's inspired and imaginative leadership, would guide the English Theatre to a new and glorious future.

AMATEUR STAGE

Notes and Topics

THE Romany Players, a recently formed repertory company in the Romford district, have vacancies for one or two amateur actors. The producer, Mr. S. Willis, also informs us that the Romany Players are prepared to give a programme of two or three one-act plays to units of the forces, A.R.P. groups, hospitals or other charity organisations in convenient areas of the London district. Communications to Mr. Willis at 15, Hayburn Way, Romford, Essex. Telephone: Romford 2515.

For a month's varied programme that of the Plaistow Little Theatre Entertainments at their Red Triangle Club, Greengate Street, E.13, would take some beating in war-time. On December 3 and 5, *Gaslight*;

10 and 12, one-act plays by youth clubs; 17, orchestral and choral programme; 19, *Quiet Wedding*; 31 and Jan. 2, The Revellers Concert Party. All performances at 6.45.

PHILIP JOHNSON ranks high as a contemporary writer of one-act plays which meet the needs of amateurs. Especially he has a keen appreciation of the fact that most groups have a predominant feminine interest, and plays to be suitable must appeal to women as players and audience.

Two of his 1942 plays are now published by Samuel French, Ltd., and both are sound, workmanlike pieces well worthy of consideration. *It's a Small World* requires five women in a setting of a London boarding house, with a good story of the quiet little mouse of a companion turning the tables on arrogance and malice. *Mrs. Methuselah* is more broadly humorous, using seven female characters to poke fun at two rival centenarians being honoured in a small country town. It's a chance for two actresses to make something of the elderly contestants.

THIRTY tons is a substantial weight. Translated into terms of vocal scores, libretti, plays, band parts, theatre books, this weight gives an idea of the task that faced the National Operatic Dramatic Association in moving its library and offices to new premises at Emanwye House, over Russell Square Station, W.C.1.

The transfer is now completed, but it is quite understandable when director Arthur Sexton reports that it was a three months' task. To avoid hopeless confusion with thousands of manuscripts a most careful system had to be adopted. How well it worked out may be seen by any member who cares to inspect the re-housed library.

He will find orderly avenues of steel shelving, holding on both sides alphabetically arranged scripts of an infinite variety of stage works. Some of the titles are a sad commentary on the ephemeral quality of stage art, but others are vivid and alive, years after the original production.

It should be more widely known what an excellent service of musical material is available from this N.O.D.A. library. Any reader who is interested should get in direct touch with the Association. And in these days of fierce waste paper campaigns, should any member of *Theatre World* ever hesitate at sending a play or score to the local bin, please give this N.O.D.A. library the first refusal. This applies to any theatrical material that may be of far more value if examined and housed for the future by experts like the N.O.D.A. librarians.

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OBITUARY

COHEN.—His many friends in the theatrical profession will regret to hear of the death on November 7th, 1942, of Pierre Cohen, the London supervisor for General Theatres Corporation, Ltd., and Moss Empires, Ltd. Sixty-one years of age, he passed away at the residence of his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Lazarus, Fieldhead, Prestbury, Cheshire. He leaves a widow and daughter.

Echoes from Broadway (continued)

as a completely stirring whole. The scenes that crop up in your mind afterwards are those of trivial comedy and not of inspiring sacrifice. And we do not believe this to be the impression Mr. Anderson intended to leave behind; neither do we believe he would tell you this was his best play to date, as some critics have acclaimed.

Flora Robson in Comedy

Flora Robson told us some months ago she was tired of being seen as the hard, grasping woman and her next play would have to provide the opportunity for American audiences to see her in a comedy rôle. So we have *The Damask Cheek*, a new comedy by John Van Druten and Lloyd Morris, starring Flora Robson.

It takes us back to New York, 1909, when it was not considered proper to see Frances Starr in a play as sensational and improper as *The Easiest Way*.

Miss Robson is seen as a reasonably young English lady of wealth and breeding, visiting a proud American family, whose son is discomfitingly engaged to an actress with *The Easiest Way* technique. The son looks at Miss Robson like a sister until his lady-killer friend opens his eyes to what he is missing. Then he would be free of the actress, and since Miss Robson has loved him long and silently, she discreetly buys off the actress and gets her man.

Without Miss Robson we do not think *The Damask Cheek* would be worth very much. It has been written with charm and engaging appeal, but it requires Miss Robson to get it across. Which she does magnificently. Armed with a new and becoming hairdo; a most ingratiating smile and some of the best acting we have seen this year. An actress to her finger tips, she is fascinating to watch and the season's first real pleasure. She even plays and sings at the piano, kisses passionately, and becomes involved in a woman-to-woman hair-pulling sequence we could gladly have dispensed with, except we might then have been denied the opportunity of seeing Miss Robson work up her temper to spitfire proportions. And she answers to the name of Rhoda. A pretty name, a pretty part, and now Miss Robson, where do we go from here?

Vic-Wells (continued)

would instance the episode of the swans flying overhead in *Lac des Cygnes*, in which Helpmann gives a "fey" and moving indication of all the tragedy to come.

With some of Miss Manchester's criticism of Wells productions of Russian classical ballets one would certainly agree; but the fact remains that the Wells performances are greatly superior to the abbreviated hotch-potch which the Russian companies are pleased to call *Lac des Cygnes*. I do not agree that "Russian feeling" is in the least essential to pure classical dancing, though it is certainly necessary in national dances such as the mazurka. One would also wish for a little more analytic and less cursory criticism of the choreography of some Wells ballets, though the description of the "bitter sense of shame, all the more terrible because it is unexplained," shows vivid insight into Ashton's *Dante Sonata*, a ballet which to me seems a disconcerting mixture of genius and muddle. There is also fine appreciation of the superb choreographic invention of *The Wanderer*, and its lovely pas-de-deux, though one is astounded to read that Helpmann is "not very well served" and "his tortuous imaginings are never able to stir us." Personally I think this almost Helpmann's finest performance. In conclusion, to Ninette de Valois as choreographer Miss Manchester is not, I think, entirely fair—her dislike of mime and a dramatic sequence again steps in—but she gives full due to Miss de Valois' masterpiece, *The Rake's Progress*, which has been revived in the present London season and which no one interested in great acting and magnificent "theatre" should miss. The whole book is, however, a tribute to the genius, foresight and planning of this wonderful woman, without whom there would certainly be no English ballet as we know it to-day. Constant Lambert's invaluable influence as musical director is also shown, and the question of the call-up of male dancers, which has worked such havoc in war-time ballet performances, is discussed forcibly.

"Balletomanes," as Miss Manchester writes, "have never stood in such need of education," and their first step towards education might very well be to buy this book, which is delightfully illustrated.

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